

## NEED FOR SWEEPING SHIFT IN CATERING POLICY OF INDIAN RAILWAYS



 **foodpanda**



### SUGGESTIONS

- Jan Ahaars in all 'A1' & 'A' category stations.
- Static Catering units shall be licensed to reputed restaurants.
- Pantry Car services shall be replaced by packed foods supplies by reputed restaurants.
- Pantry car haulage charge Rs.1000 crore incurred by Railways can be saved.
- Additional earnings through license fee & through additional accommodation available in place of pantry cars.
- Solar power ovens, cold storage.
- RO water in all platforms
- Drinking water cess for the tickets costing more than Rs.100.
- Railways can rally round in achieving the PM's Goal of green India.

*Suggestion by*  
**K.V.RAMESH, SSE/ICF, Chennai**  
**Sr.JGS/IRTSA, [rameshirtsa@yahoo.co.in](mailto:rameshirtsa@yahoo.co.in) 9003149578**

# **NEED FOR SWEEPING SHIFT IN CATERING POLICY OF INDIAN RAILWAYS**

*K.V.RAMESH, SSE/ICF, Chennai*  
*Sr.JGS/IRTSA, [rameshirtsa@yahoo.co.in](mailto:rameshirtsa@yahoo.co.in)*  
**9003149578**

## **I. PREAMBLE**

1. Indian Railways carries about 23 million passengers, runs 12,619 passenger trains (5009 EMU + 3362 Mail/Express + 4298 ordinary) including sub-urban trains daily and have 7137 Railway Stations. Indian Railways provides one of the lowest fare railway system for passengers in the world.
2. Safety, punctuality, cleanliness, speed, comfort, cost effectiveness, availability, frequency of service, behavior of staff, etc decide the satisfaction of traveling public.
3. Indian Railways continuously improves its performance in all the areas to satisfy the customers.
4. One area which attracts many criticisms from all quarter for Railways is catering, though catering is nothing to do with core activities of Indian Railways ie transporting passengers and goods.
5. Railways is being continuously criticized for poor quality of food, over charging, less quantity, misbehavior of staff, less hygiene food, etc.
6. Indian Railways have handed over catering service to IRCTC through a policy decision to manage it professionally. But due to many criticisms in the year 2010 Zonal Railways have taken back the responsibility of catering substantially.
7. Since then, Railways is making various steps to improve its catering service to the satisfaction of its passengers.
8. Majority of catering services over Indian Railways are being managed through contracts, even though small part is being managed directly by department.
9. Recently IRCTC has introduced e-catering service for the passengers of trains passing through 45 specified stations as a pilot project. McDonald's, KFC, Switz Foods, Only Alibaba, Dominos, Haldiram, Bikanerwala, Nirualas, Sagar Ratna, Pizza Hut have entered into a tie-up with IRCTC. It can cater the need of higher class passengers and younger generation who are well accustomed to e-services.
10. A simple hygiene food with regional flavor will be more attractive & purposeful to many of the common passenger instead of multi-cuisine menu and passengers should be able to get them across the windows on payment.
11. **Instead of depending on existing system of licensing to catering contractors for the period of five years, catering units both mobile and static can be contracted out to reputed restaurants of particular area/division, which has a reputation for its brand name. Unlike the present system, any of the deficiency in its service will have an impact on its brand name as a whole.**

## II. CATERING FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN INDIAN RAILWAYS

### 1. Pantry Cars attached to pairs of trains in Indian Railways

MAIL & EXPRESS		
1	<b>Departmental</b>	
a	Zonal Railway	4
b	IRCTC	14
	<b>Sub total</b>	<b>18</b>
2	<b>Licensee</b>	
a	Zonal Railway	248
b	IRCTC	8
	Sub total	256
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>274</b>

### RAJDHANI, DURONTO & SHATABDI EXPRESSES.

64 pairs are provided with pantry service, out of that 26 pairs are managed by IRCTC departmentally, 1 pair is managed by IRCTC through licensee and 37 pairs are managed by Zonal Railways through licensee.

### 2. Catering units in Station

1	<b>Departmental</b>	
a	Jan Ahaar	46
b	Refreshment rooms	11
c	Base Kitchen	19
d	Small catering units	421
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>486</b>
2	<b>Licensee</b>	
a	Small catering units	
	A1, A, B, C Stations	5557
	D, E & F stations	2473
b	Food Plaza	116
c	Fast Food Units	73
d	AVM	623
e	Milk stall	660
f	Refreshment rooms in A1 & A	150
g	Cell Kitchen	29
h	HMPC stalls, Ice cream parlours & Fruit stalls	118
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>9799</b>
	<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>10285</b>

### 3. Financial facts of catering units (2014-15)

Earning through license fee (+)	- Rs.515 cr
Loss by departmental units (-)	- Rs. 56 cr
Haulage charges for Pantry Cars (-)	- Rs.1000 cr

### 4. Financial performance of catering units (2013-14)

Total Expenses	Total earnings	Loss
Rs.1437 cr	Rs.485 cr	<b>Rs 952 cr</b>

### III. SERIOUS SHORT COMINGS IN THE EXISTING SYSTEM

1. Railways incur Rs.1000 crore loss as haulage charges to the Pantry Cars attached to mail & express trains.
2. Pantry cars in 338 passenger trains reduce their carrying capacity in high density routes and earnings for Indian Railways.
3. Majority of catering is managed by unorganized & non professional catering contractors.
4. Contractors who have invested substantially are trying to get back their money as quickly as possible from helpless passengers.
5. Existing licensees are too big to manage by Railways and due to their increased financial prowess, they are able to outbid any rival in a transparent bidding system.
6. Hence, passengers are over charged, served with poor quality of food, less quantity, un-hygienic food, etc.
7. Staff employed by the catering contractors are very much under paid and they also tend to overcharge and adulterate food items. Some of the common problems are,
  - i. Over charging for water bottles, tea, coffee, etc
  - ii. Water bottles refilled with ordinary water.
  - iii. Adulteration of coffee and tea, etc
  - iv. Selling food items & water bottles manufactured by non standard manufacturers.
  - v. Reduce the quantity of food given by the contractor.
  - vi. Selling food items beyond their expiree date.
  - vii. Selling the foods even in late night that were prepared in the morning.
8. Catering services become monopoly in which passengers have no option except to eat food offered by the contractors.
9. Regional food habits are ignored.
10. Railways despite making many valid attempts during past many years for managing catering departmentally, through IRCTC and through contractors, finally end up in getting very bad name.
11. Railways departmental catering staff are neither professionally qualified nor sufficiently trained cook, bearers, restaurant managers, etc.
12. It is therefore time Railways to look for other options than those have been tried so far.

## **IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW CATERING POLICY FOR INDIAN RAILWAYS**

### **1. Static Catering Units in stations**

Out of 10,300 static catering units, around 500 catering units of varied size are managed by Railways directly throughout its network, around 6000 catering units of varied size located in A1, A, B & C stations across Indian Railways are contracted out to sell various food items.

#### **1A. Jan Ahaars in all 'A1' & 'A' category stations**

- i. Jan Ahaars which are managed departmentally offers food at very reasonable rates and they are relatively popular among common passengers, but there are only 46 Jan Ahaar units available in whole Indian Railways.
- ii. **Jan Ahaar units atleast two each shall be provided in all 75 'A1' category stations and atleast one Jan Ahaar units each shall be provided in 332 'A' category stations shall be provided and they shall be managed by Railways directly.**

#### **1B. Static Catering Units in stations have to be managed by reputed restaurants**

- i. **All the existing static units with kitchen or without kitchen shall be licensed out to reputed restaurants situated near particular station or within division.**
- ii. To encourage healthy competition in which passengers will be able to get quality food, in all 'A1' & 'A' category stations, license shall be provided to atleast two restaurants.
- iii. Divisional Railway Manager shall be empowered to finalise the licensed contractors.
- iv. Size of the restaurant, property tax & service tax paid by the restaurant in the preceding three years, number of staff employed in the restaurant with EPF (Employee Provident Fund) contribution, number of employees paid through their bank account, etc shall be made as criteria besides licensing fee.
- v. **Price & quantity in weight should be specified by Railways for common food items like idle, dosa, chappathi, puri, paratha, curd bath, lemon rice bath, veg-meals, non-veg meals, veg briyani, egg briyani, chicken briyani, vada, samosa, puffs, bread & bun, boiled groundnut, boiled chenna, coffee, tea, milk, etc. This will cater the need of more than 60% of passengers. Variation in prices between railway divisions shall be allowed to suit to their local conditions.**
- vi. Apart from common food items specified by Railways, restaurants shall be allowed to sell other variety of multi cuisine food items at pre-declared price for specified quantity.
- vii. They shall be allowed to sell biscuits, chocolates, cookies, sweets, savorys, bottled drinks, ice-creams, etc either made by them or by reputed firms or by both. All these items should be sold at market price.
- viii. **Both online booking and purchase across counter shall be permitted.**

### **2. Withdrawal of pantry cars**

- i. **Pantry cars attached to all mail & express trains shall be withdrawn, except for the trains which are running nonstop for more than 8 hours during the day.**

- ii. Packed food (environment friendly packing materials) and other items can be loaded in the train by licensed contractors in prescribed trains. Licensed contractors shall be decided as like suggestion given in previous suggestion 1B.
- iii. **One bay in one 3 tier sleeper coach for one train formation shall be allotted to the licensed contractors to load & stock food items. Hot cases, ovens, cold storage shall be provided in that bay and all of them can be solar powered.**
- iv. Pantry cars can be withdrawn from 80% of trains ie. 220 pairs of trains.
- v. **Savings: Expenses of around Rs.800 crore per year towards haulage charges for pantry cars can be shaved.**
- vi. **Additional Earnings: Indian Railways can earn more than Rs.14.84 crores per year additionally by attaching upper class passenger coaches in place of existing panty cars.**

*(Average lead of passengers in mail & Express trains in upper class during the year 2014-15 is 732 km, earnings per passenger km in upper class is 126.25 paise.-  $732\text{km} \times 126.25 \text{ paise} \times 440 \text{ trains} \times 365 \text{ days} = \text{Rs.}14.84 \text{ crores}$ )*

- vii. **These savings & earnings are over and above the license fee railways will get from the contractors.**

### **3. Installation of RO plants (for purified drinking water) in all plat forms of Indian Railways to reduce bottled drinking water usage. – Drinking water cess for the tickets costing more than Rs.100.**

- i. Provision of good drinking water in railway platforms free of cost has not received sufficient focus and passengers are forced to buy bottled water to get good drinking water and after paying substantial amount passengers are not assured of getting good drinking water.
- ii. Selling bottled waters at higher price and adulterated drinking water are two most common complaints faced by passengers even though majority of them were going unreported.
- iii. Impact on environment is also very high, since huge number of plastic bottles are being thrown discriminately along the track throughout Indian Railway. Indian railways unable to evolve a fruitful system to dispose empty water bottles in an environmental friendly way.
- iv. It will be better to get rid of bottled drinking water as far as possible to make Indian Railways more environmental friendly, for that
- v. **Indian Railways has to install RO plants in all of its platforms. RO plants can be of different capacity & different variety to suit to the requirement and to local water conditions.**
- vi. **Funding of RO water plants: Installation & maintenance of RO plants shall be funded by levying drinking water cess for the tickets valued more than Rs.100. RO water may either supplied free of cost or at nominal price at the rate of 50 paise per letter. Drinking water cess is very much justifiable since railways are going to provide good drinking water to its passengers only and water is one of the most essential needs of human kind.**

- vii. IR branded pet bottles: To encourage passengers to carry environmental friendly water bottles with them, Indian Railways can sell IR branded pet bottles made of stainless steel and unbreakable glass at reasonable rates.
- viii. This will help Railways to rally round achieving the goal of the Prime Minister's & Government's - **GREEN INDIA**.

Thank you

K.V.RAMESH

9003149578

Senior Section Engineer

Integral Coach Factory

Chennai – 82

&

Senior Joint General Secretary

rameshirtsa@yahoo.co.in

Indian Railway Technical Supervisors Association